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. . OF THE WAR . .

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AN INTERVIEW

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Chairman of the British Red Cross Society,

which appeared in the "New York American" and the International News Service Syndicate.

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MERCY-WORKERS OF THE WAR.

To no one race in this war belongs exclusively the work of mercy. France, Russia, England, Germany and Austria have each striven hard to improve the conditions surrounding the wounded in their Armies.

In the Ottoman Red Crescent, a Mahommedan equivalent of the Red Cross, even the Turks have a corps of mercy-workers to render aid to those injured in battle. But not only the belligerent nations are occupied in the field of mercy toward fallen fighters. America, with all the cheerful optimism which characterizes her people, has worked vigorously to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded soldiers in France.

Distant Abyssinia, too, was one of the first neutral countries to establish a place of succour for the injured near the firing line. Indeed, the Anglo-Ethiopian Hospital at Frevent, provided with funds supplied by the Abyssinian

Crown Prince, did great service early in the war. Japan, representing the Far East, also sent a wonderfully-equipped ambulance corps, which has since occupied the Hotel Astoria, Paris. Dainty women and intellectual men have given their time and their services eagerly in the cause of humanity.

The ladies of the Russian Court, self-sacrificing in the extreme, have been trained for hospital work in the field. They have performed duties at which men might shudder, and they have performed them well. So it is in France, and in England, and in the other countries both in and out of the war. That the majority of the workers have been volunteers is to the credit of civilisation. Mercy, so often beaten under in the actual conflicts of the belligerents, has survived gloriously among those whose function has been to relieve, where possible, the victims of shot and of shell.

Like the aeroplane, the automobile is a new departure, a very important one in warfare. Since August, 1914, it has played many parts. Armoured cars, transport lorries, and other vehicles directly and indirectly contributing to the success of the different armies in the field, have established a fresh reputation for the

motor industry. But it is largely owing to the motor ambulance that the noble work of mercy has been possible.

So far as Great Britain is concerned, the Motor Ambulance Service owes its existence and its triumph to Lord Derby's brother, the Hon. Arthur Stanley, C.B., M.P., Chairman of British Red Cross Society, and also of the Royal Automobile Club. Soon after the outbreak of war, in September, 1914, Mr. Stanley, quick to see the possibilities of the motor ambulance, was given a permit to send one or two out to the front, by the late Lord Kitchener.

" One of the first things I did on receiving the necessary permission," said Mr. Stanley, " was to get together half a dozen volunteer motorists, all members of the Royal Automobile Club, to drive the Ambulance Cars which we were sending to France. Our position was a curious one. The motor-ambulance was then practically an unknown quantity so far as actual warfare went, and the military authorities stipulated that our drivers were not to wear uniform, nor, under any circumstances, to go near the firing line. There was to be no Red Cross on the cars. Truly, the mission of

the motor ambulance was to be extremely limited. They were simply to go about far behind the firing-line and pick up wounded men who could not be carried to the field hospitals ; men, for example, who had crawled for safety into abandoned cottages and barns.

" With the possible exception of the American Ambulance cars at Neuilly, ours were the first motor ambulances used in France. But the value of a rapid service for the transport of wounded soldiers was quickly recognised, and now, of course, wherever there is fighting there are motor ambulances."

Here is a typical instance, as told by Mr. Stanley, how the motor ambulance proved its worth in the early days of the war :

" Late one evening one of our Ambulances crept up close to the firing line. They met an officer who turned them back ' because,' as he said, ' it is so dark, it is no use going further.'

" They went back to a farm house and to bed. In the middle of the night they were awakened by that same officer, who told them that a wounded soldier, shot through both legs, was lying almost in the German lines. It was so dangerous a mission that the officer wouldn't

order the Ambulance to go. He just told them where the man was and left them to decide. They went. They crawled, without lights, along an unknown road in the darkness ; got almost within the German lines, where they found the man, and brought him back to safety. That wounded soldier had lain there for days, and would most certainly have died, had he not been rescued that night."

In this modest and voluntary way the motor ambulance came into its own without one penny of cost to the Government !

" To-day," went on Mr. Stanley, " there are about 1,600 motor ambulances and cars at the French front alone. Another 1,000 are scattered about with the troops in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Salonika, Malta, East Africa, etc. We have three Ambulance Convoys—each one consisting of some sixty cars and a Radiographing Convoy—working in Italy. We have a number of cars in Petrograd and on the Western Russian front, while we recently sent a small Convoy as a present to the Grand Duke Nicholas in the Caucasus."

Surely this is a wonderful example of what voluntary organisation and patriotism can do.

These motors and ambulances have been provided, and their upkeep maintained, entirely by voluntary subscriptions. Although they are outside the official Red Cross Society, they have placed themselves under its control, and have worked in complete unity and harmony with the official Society.

"Up to the present," said Mr. Stanley, "we have collected over £4,000,000 for the Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance Societies. The money comes in at the rate of about £1,000,000 every six months. This shows the public appreciation of the work. Our support comes from all sections of society."

As a typical instance of this, Mr. Stanley mentioned that the coalowners and miners are supporting between them several Ambulance Convoys at the front. The coalowners contribute so much weekly out of their profits, while the miners have a voluntary weekly levy on their wages.

"I never expected when we started," Mr. Stanley stated with some pride, "to be spending on stores and personnel a sum of over £3,000 daily, as we are now doing.

"As an instance of the diversity of our work it may be interesting to note that we arranged the other day to send Motor Boats to Mesopotamia and 'Charlie Chaplin' films to Malta, this latter for the amusement of the convalescent soldiers!"

The Red Cross has always been noted for promptness and efficiency. Mr. Stanley related that in the early days of the war, when his organisation was in its infancy, the Director-General of the Royal Army Medical Corps suddenly applied for 4,000 hot-water bottles.

"The Director-General laughed and said he thought he had given us a poser," said Mr. Stanley, adding, "But I sent him the whole 4,000 within 24 hours! I was extra lucky to be able to do this, but, by an extraordinary coincidence, a gentleman had called the day before and given us the somewhat unusual present of 2,000 hot-water bottles! We dashed around and got the rest here, there and everywhere.

"One of the outstanding features of our organisation has been the splendid work done by the women. There are at present over 70,000 women representing all classes, who are

voluntarily working for the Red Cross, the Voluntary Aid Division (the V.A.D.) and other organisations, most of whom have had a certain amount of training in ambulance work in peace time."

Mr. Stanley mentioned, by the way, the excellent artificial limbs for maimed soldiers produced by American manufacturers, both in the United States, and especially at a factory established near London, where many disabled men are themselves employed. " I was conducted round this factory," explained Mr. Stanley, " and a foreman directed my attention particularly to certain contrivances being turned out in the American shops. When I had finished my inspection of the first shop, the foreman suddenly left me and went to the other end of the room. Then quite without warning he approached me running at great speed. Pulling up right in front of me he said, 'Which is my artificial leg?' I confessed that I didn't know he had one! In truth, it was only after he had repeated the run that I did detect a slight stiffness in some of his movements.

" He then told me that practically everyone in the shop had an artificial limb of sorts. Yet

all the men appeared to be quite normal, working with avidity at their trade. America," concluded Mr. Stanley, " is certainly well ahead of other countries in the perfection of artificial limbs."

While the women of all nations at war have been working courageously in aid of their men, American women also have come out brilliantly in the labour of mercy. At the commencement of the war a group of American women, nearly all married to Englishmen, met together to consider how they might best render assistance to the soldiers of the King. The result was the birth of the American Women's War Relief Fund, of which Lady Paget became President, with Mrs. John Astor as Vice-President, the Duchess of Marlborough as Chairman, and Lady Lowther and Mrs. Harcourt as Honorary Secretaries. Other women closely identified with the work were Lady Randolph Churchill, Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, and the Hon. Mrs. John Ward.

The American Women's War Relief Fund began by sending a motor ambulance out to the front. " Friends in Boston " subscribed for another—it was actually the seventh—which was duly presented to the War Office in

London. Down in Devonshire, at Paignton, near Torquay, there is an American Women's War Hospital, where thousands of wounded soldiers have been nursed back to health. Not contented with these activities, the American women in question have opened workrooms in various parts of the British capital to enable girls thrown out of work to learn other trades, and so to become self-supporting in spite of the war. Queen Mary herself, recognising the extreme usefulness of the American Women's War Fund charities, has thanked the different ladies responsible for their admirable and entirely successful efforts. As for the beneficiaries, the vast collection of letters of appreciation which pour in daily from non-commissioned officers and men—nursed at the American Women's War Hospital—bear evidence of what they feel.

But Americans are busy helping in France as well as in England, and the American Relief Clearing House in Paris is also an institution of very considerable value and importance. It represents the American Red Cross, and its Distributing Committee has already apportioned more than 4,000,000 parcels, bales of cotton, clothes (for men, women and

children) shoes, hospital accessories, surgical instruments and countless other useful things. No less than 2,000 hospitals in France have benefited from the American Relief Clearing House, which has Joseph H. Choate for its President.

Modelled somewhat on the lines of the organisation over which Mr. Stanley presides is the American Volunteer Motor Ambulance Corps, yet another body of mercy-workers. In September, 1914, Professor Richard Norton, of Harvard University, saw for himself the plight of the wounded French soldiers who suffered additionally through inadequate means of transportation. Consequently, with the co-operation of some of his friends, he started the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps, which quickly widened its field from two cars to seventy-five. Originally composed of American and British members, the Corps has, while always working in conjunction with the French Army, been placed under the British Red Cross, owing to questions of American neutrality.

The volunteers of the American Motor Ambulance Corps have given their time and their services uncomplainingly to the attainment of an excellent object. Under the Chairmanship

of the late Henry James, the novelist, who directed matters from London, many young college graduates freely entered the Corps to work strenuously, without pay or preferment. Professor Norton, Ridgely Carter, Sir John Wolfe Barry, Jordan L. Mott, John Dixon Morrison and many other well-known men are members of the London Council. Mr. Norton and several of the men have been awarded the Croix de Guerre and the Croix d'Armée, the former decoration ranking high in the honours of warring and Republican France. Substantial contributions have been paid into the treasury of the Corps by sympathisers in the United States, while donations in the form of cars, ranging from the Rolls-Royce to the Ford, have been appreciatively received by the Council. Working close up to the firing line, the American motor ambulance men have brought relief to many thousands of wounded and sick soldiers. Sometimes dashing about in country exposed to German artillery fire, the cars have not infrequently come through a hail of bursting shells, but so far without the loss of a single life. The only member of the Corps to die is A. D. Loney, who, while returning from a brief visit to America, was drowned in the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

The American Motor Ambulance Corps has been "mentioned" for its discipline as well as for the high standard of its members generally. Lt.-Col. Leonard Robinson, in the following words, narrates in a report to the United States some experiences he has had with the American volunteers: "Immediately after our return from Lizy-sur-Ourcq," states the Colonel; "a call came from the *Service de Santé* for an ambulance to proceed to Coulommiers to bring back General Snow, who had been seriously injured. Starting with an ambulance and a pilot car, and accompanied by Dr. du Bouchet and Surgeon-Major Langle, of the French Army, we left Paris at about 5 p.m., reaching Coulommiers towards 8 p.m. The town had been but recently evacuated by the enemy, and, as the General was not in a condition to be moved, we spent the night there. The following morning an early start was made and General Snow was brought safely to Neuilly, where he remained for several weeks.

"With the trip to Coulommiers the period during which the Service made expeditions to the front for the purpose of bringing wounded back to the Entrenched Camp—Paris—came to a close, and a new phase of duty was entered upon.

"While the ambulance was absent at Lizy-sur-Ourcq, a call came from the British authorities asking that ambulances be sent to their clearing station at Villeneuve-Triage to bring wounded, taken from their sanitary trains, to Paris. No ambulance being available at the time, an emergency column of touring cars, headed by Dr. Davenport, was sent out, bringing in a number of cases and inaugurating a service which occupied all our time for several weeks.

"The work at Villeneuve-Triage was of such a nature that, although it resembled in many particulars that which our Paris section is now performing in a regular manner, some explanation is necessary, in order that the full importance of the services rendered to the British Army at that period may be understood. The British Expeditionary Force was still occupying the approximate centre of the Allied line previous to the great change of front which followed upon the Battle of the Aisne. The British Base at Havre had been temporarily abandoned, and Nantes was then the post where supplies and reinforcements were forwarded and upon which the wounded, capable of enduring transportation by rail,

were evacuated upon the hospital ships for England.

"Villeneuve-Triage, a few hundred yards north of Villeneuve St. Georges, is one of the most important junctions and railway yards of the Paris, Lyons and Mediterranean Railroad. Here the Royal Army Medical Corps had established a sort of clearing hospital, where the wounded to whom transportation would prove fatal were taken off for treatment and evacuation upon the British Base Hospital at Versailles, or upon the military hospitals of Paris. Theoretically, the situation was ideal; in practice, it was devoid of every facility both for the care and the transportation of the wounded. Only a handful of devoted surgeons and R.A.M.C. men, with scant material, were available, and the trains which could be found for the conveyance of the wounded to Paris were quite insufficient. At the time, "sanitary trains"—as the term is now understood—were conspicuous by their absence. British wounded were brought from the front, a journey of 18 to 48 hours, in ordinary passenger carriages or, quite often, in cattle or goods trucks, upon beds of straw. The American Ambulance Convoy was called to the relief,

and for days the cars were continually on the road, working day and night, almost beyond the limit of human endurance. As a rule, the ambulance cars proceeded in convoy to Villeneuve, where patients, if necessary, had morphine or other narcotics administered to them before being transported to Paris. The hospitals of the American Ambulance at Neuilly, the Buffon, the Astoria, the Majestic and Claridge's, as well as the British Hospital, were all supplied with patients by us.

"The work of our Corps at Villeneuve was inspected upon several occasions by the British military and Red Cross authorities. The statement that, 'The American Ambulance saved the situation' was the least praise we received. It was only when the change of front of the British Army entailed the transfer of its bases upon Calais, Boulogne and Havre that our work at Villeneuve-Triage was brought to a close.

"While we were operating at Villeneuve, several other duties were performed, among them being the sending of squads to Choisy-le-Roi and Achères for wounded. We were also responsible for an expedition to Meaux, to bring in Captain Cummins, R.N., who had

been very seriously injured in a motor accident in which his son lost his life.

"During the few weeks which elapsed between September 4th, 1914, and the closing days of the work at Villeneuve, the ambulances at our disposal were handled as a single unit, and, thanks to Mrs. Vanderbilt, four more vehicles (Fords), of a slightly improved type, were put in hand towards September 20th. The idea of extending the radius of the work to the armies in the field had not then been seriously entertained by the authorities of the Ambulance, and considerable opposition to any such departure was manifested in certain quarters. The matter was, however, brought to a head on October 1st when we were asked by the Royal Army Medical Corps and the British Red Cross to send out as many ambulances as we could spare with those of the Red Cross which were to leave for the front in a few days. This request settled the entire question; in spite of opposition the four new ambulance cars were detached, and, together with one older one, were prepared for service. On the morning of October 8th our detachment —afterwards known as Squad C.—joined the British Army Convoy and left for the front.

Messrs. Bate, Maclay and Rochfort, who are still among our most efficient officers, went with it. It was the beginning of the splendid field service which we possess to-day.

" Our Squad co-operated with Motor Ambulance Column No. 2, stationed at the British Clearing Hospital, Bethune. The Bethune hospital handled 500 wounded per day, the ambulances running out to the field hospitals and even to the dressing stations to bring in the men. In the latter duty the American cars excelled, their lightness and handiness permitting them to dash up the worst roads and across fields, while the rapidity with which they could be loaded made it possible for them to do their work and retire before the enemy's fire could be concentrated upon them. The men had very many narrow escapes, but the danger was compensated for by the magnificent reputation which they earned. The British, who were grudging in their praise at first, before long said our men were always ready, always disciplined and always prepared to face any danger or any fatigue. Captain Kelly, the officer commanding the Column, cited ' the Americans ' as an example to his own men."

The American Volunteer Motor Ambulance Corps has certainly done immense service in creating a very favourable impression on the people of France—people, beyond all others, capable of appreciating kindness and sympathy. But it has not been alone in this respect. The American Ambulance at Neuilly, known before the war as the American Hospital, has also acquired the reputation of performing miracles for the wounded.

" I have visited most of the war hospitals in France," said a Society woman who has gone through the war as a *brancardière* of the French Red Cross, " and I have never seen such wonderful work—many of the cases are simply terrible, worse than anywhere else—as that performed at the American Ambulance, Neuilly. There they treat daily the most critical surgical cases. Some of the wounded men—poor fellows—seem almost blown away, so little remains for treatment."

One effect of the Conscription Act in England, one may add, is the sudden call for women Red Cross motor ambulance drivers. A large contingent—about 90—were selected for the British Red Cross cars in France almost on the last day of June.